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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 241583

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, LI (TOLBERT, WILLIAM R.)

SUBJECT: TOLBERT VISIT: BRIEFING OF LIBERIAN MINISTERS
SEPTEMBER 22.

1. SEPTEMBER 22, SENIOR DEPARTMENT OFFICERS BRIEFED
LIBERIAN FOREIGN MINISTER DENNIS, MINISTER OF FINANCE
PHILLIPS, MINISTER OF PLANNING AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS NEAL,
LIBERIAN AMBASSADOR DENNIS AND LIBERIAN COUNSELOR OF
EMBASSY BULL AT DEPARTMENT.

2. ACTING SECRETARY ROBINSON WELCOMED LIBERIANS TO
DEPARTMENT AND WAS FOLLOWED, IN TURN, BY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY AATHERTON ON THE NEAR EAST, ASSISTANT SECRETARY
LEWIS ON THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY, AND DEPUTY ASSISTANT
SECRETARY ARMITAGE ON SOVIET POLICY. ACTING AF ASSISTANT
SECRETARY SEELYE CONCLUDED WITH A SUMMARY OF US INITIATIVES
IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. AT CLOSE OF MEETING FOREIGN MINISTER
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DENNIS REQUESTED A FEW MINUTES WITH ACTING SECRETARY

ROBINSON IN WHICH HE MADE VERY CLEAR PRESIDENT TOLBERT'S REQUIREMENT FOR A CLEAR STATEMENT OF ADDITIONAL US ASSISTANCE THAT HE COULD CITE ON HIS RETURN TO MONROVIA AS TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF THE SUCCESS OF THE VISIT.

3. ACTING SECRETARY ROBINSON, IN WELCOMING THE LIBERIANS NOTED SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE US AND LIBERIA WHICH RESULTED FROM LONG HISTORY OF CULTURAL, HISTORICAL, ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL TIES. HE NOTED THAT US AND LIBERIAN VIEWS, ESPECIALLY ON AFRICA, WERE EXTREMELY CLOSE AND LOOKED FORWARD TO FURTHER DISCUSSIONS DURING THE REMAINDER OF THE VISIT TO WASHINGTON. DENNIS THANKED THE ACTING SECRETARY AND NOTED LIBERIANS' DESIRE TO STRENGTHEN THE PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH AMERICAN OFFICIALS.

4. ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON BRIEFLY DESCRIBED THE BACKGROUND OF THE MIDDLE EAST SITUATION AND EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE US ATTACHES TO FUTURE PROGRESS NOTING THAT UNLESS PROGRESS IS MADE THE SITUATION COULD DETERIORATE. HE STRESSED THE NEED FOR A RESUMPTION OF ARAB-ISRAELI NEGOTIATIONS IN EARLY 1977. IN REPLY, DENNIS BEGAN BY EXPRESSING REGRET REGARDING THE MURDER OF US AMBASSADOR MELOY IN LEBANON, AND COMMENTED LIBERIA'S POSITION ON THE MIDDLE EAST HAD OFTEN BEEN STATED. LIBERIA RECOGNIZED ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST, BUT THOUGHT THE PALESTINIANS ALSO HAD THE SAME RIGHTS. HE NOTED THAT LIBERIA OFTEN FOUND ITSELF ISOLATED IN THE OAU ON THIS QUESTION, AND COMMENTED ON THE DIFFICULTY OF SUPPORTING ISRAEL IN AN ORGANIZATION WHICH SEES A CLOSE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE SITUATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTH AFRICA AND WHICH, IN ITS DETERMINATION TO OPPOSE RACISM, CAN EASILY BE PERSUADED THAT ZIONISM IS A FORM OF RACISM. HE NOTED LIBERIA'S DESIRE TO SEE NEGOTIATIONS RESUMED. HE COMMENTED THAT THE PLO WAS RECOGNIZED BY MANY MEMBERS OF THE OAU, AND IS A MEMBER OF THE NON-ALIGNED MOVEMENT. HE EXPRESSED THE VIEW THAT ISRAEL SHOULD RECOGNIZE THE PLO EVEN THOUGH THE PLO DOES NOT RECOGNIZE ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO EXIST.

5. ASSISTANT SECRETARY LEWIS EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR
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THE ROLE LIBERIA PLAYED AT THE COLOMBO NON-ALIGNED SUMMIT. HE SAID WE ARE SEEKING TO GET THE CONCEPT BETTER ACCEPTED THAT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY CAN MAKE PROGRESS ON MAJOR ISSUES. HE SAID THAT HE DID NOT KNOW WHY THE HOSTILE KOREA RESOLUTION WAS WITHDRAWN, BUT SAID HE THOUGHT NORTH KOREA DID NOT WISH TO HAVE IT DEMONSTRATED THAT THE HOSTILE RESOLUTION WAS LOSING SUPPORTERS AND THE FRIENDLY RESOLUTION GAINING SUPPORT. HE NOTED THAT TWO SETS OF ISSUES

WOULD DETERMINE THE CLIMATE OF THIS YEAR'S GENERAL ASSEMBLY, THE MIDDLE EAST AND SOUTHERN AFRICA. HE DESCRIBED THE FRG INITIATIVE TO SECURE PASSAGE OF A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE RIGHTS OF HOSTAGES IN TERRORIST CASES. HE EXPRESSED PLEASURE THAT THE COMMITTEE OF 24 HAS PUT OFF PUERTO RICO AS AN ISSUE, AND COMMENTED THAT WE DID NOT KNOW WHAT PANAMA INTENDED REGARDING THE

CANAL. HE DREW ATTENTION TO THE EXISTENCE OF SOME HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS AND SAID WE WISHED TO TREAT THESE QUESTIONS OBJECTIVELY, AND TO AVOID CONCENTRATING ATTENTION ON THE POLICIES OF ONE OR TWO COUNTRIES. HE CONCLUDED BY NOTING THE PROBLEMS WE FACE IN HOLDING DOWN THE GROWTH OF UN BUDGETS.

6. DENNIS AGREED WITH HIS ANALYSIS OF THE UNGA AND COMMENTED WITH REGARD TO KOREA THAT IT TOOK COURAGE TO SUPPORT SOUTH KOREA IN AN AFRICAN ENVIRONMENT. HE SUGGESTED, WITH REGARD TO TERRORISM, THAT WE FIND ANOTHER WORD AND PROPOSED "PIRACY". HE SAID LIBERIA WOULD SUPPORT THE PRINCIPLE OF THE FRG INITIATIVE. REFERRING TO UN BUDGETS, HE NOTED THE NEED FOR MORE RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPMENT AS OPPOSED TO THE SUPPORT OF UN BUREAUCRACIES. HE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT OF THE ISSUES DISCUSSED AT COLOMBO, THE ECONOMIC ISSUES WOULD BE THE MOST IMPORTANT. HE EXPRESSED REGRET THAT UNESCO SHOULD RECEIVE SUCH UN-FORTUNATE PUBLICITY IN THE US, AS A RESULT OF ITS ACTIONS TOWARD ISRAEL, WHEN AN AFRICAN (M'BOW-SENEGAL) WAS PRESIDENT.

7. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ARMITAGE SUMMARIZED RUSSIAN INITIATIVES IN THE ANGOLAN CRISIS AND NOTED THAT ONE OF THE RESULTS HAD BEEN A REACTIVATION IN THE US
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OF THE VIEW THAT THE RUSSIANS COULD NOT BE TRUSTED. DENNIS FOUND ARMITAGE'S STATEMENT MOST HELPFUL AND COMMENTED THAT THIS WAS OF PARTICULAR INTEREST TO THEM DUE TO THEIR PROXIMITY TO GUINEA. HE SUGGESTED A RESUMPTION OF THE DISCUSSION OF SOVIET POLICY LATER IN THE VISIT (SEPTTEL REPORTS FURTHER DISCUSSIONS ON THIS POINT SEPTEMBER 23).

8. IN FEW MOMENTS REMAINING, SEELYE QUICKLY SUMMARIZED US INITIATIVES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. IN REPLY DENNIS DREW DISTINCTION BETWEEN RHODESIA AND NAMIBIA, AND COMMENTED THAT CONTRARY TO EARLIER EXPECTATIONS IT NOW APPEARED THAT THE RHODESIAN PROBLEM WOULD BEGIN TO MOVE TOWARD AN ACCEPTABLE SOLUTION BEFORE THE NAMIBIAN. HE FOUND THIS SURPRISING IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT SOUTH

AFRICA CONTROLLED MOST OF THE ELEMENTS NECESSARY TO A NAMIBIA SOLUTION, WHEREAS THE RHODESIAN SITUATION WAS FAR MORE COMPLICATED.

9. BEFORE DEPARTING, FONMIN DENNIS ASKED TO SEE ACTING SECRETARY IN SMALL MEETING WITHOUT OTHER LIBERIANS PRESENT. DENNIS SAID TOLBERT URGENTLY REQUIRED "A POSITIVE WORD" IN ORDER TO DEMONSTRATE TO LIBERIANS THAT THE VISIT HAS BEEN A SUCCESS. HE HOPED FOR A DEFINITION OF THE US COMMITMENT TO LIBERIA AND SUGGESTED "SOMETHING SIGNED BY PRESIDENT FORD". THE ACTING SECRETARY REPLIED THAT, AS THE FONMIN WAS AWARE, THE EXECUTIVE RECOMMENDS BUT THE CONGRESS DECIDES AND SUGGESTED THAT TOO PRECISE A DEFINITION OF WHAT WE HOPED TO DO COULD BE SELF-DEFEATING. IT WAS AGREED THAT FURTHER DISCUSSIONS COULD SEEK AGREEMENT ON A TEXT ACCEPTABLE TO BOTH SIDES THAT COULD BE USED TO DEMONSTRATE THE US COMMITMENT TO ASSIST LIBERIA (SEPTTEL DESCRIBES MEETING BETWEEN MINISTERS NEAL AND PHILLIPS AND AA/AFR-SCOTT, SEPTEMBER 23, WHICH LED TO AGREEMENT ON SUCH A TEXT).

ROBINSON

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